

AMENDMENT TO THE CLAIMS

Please **AMEND** claims 1, 3 and 7-9 as follows.

Please **ADD** claims 10-17 as follows.

A copy of all pending claims and a status of the claims is provided below.

1. (currently amended) An image forming device comprising:

an upstream-side sheet transport pathway;
a plurality of downstream-side sheet transport pathways that diverge from the upstream-side sheet transport pathway at a divergence point; and

a pathway switching mechanism that, at the divergence point, selectively guides sheets transported following the upstream-side sheet transport pathway to one of the plurality of downstream-side sheet transport pathways, the pathway switching mechanism including:

a pair of upstream-side gate members and a gate member pivoting unit, the pair of upstream-side gate members including a pair of pivot shafts and a pair of gates, the pair of pivot shafts being disposed with the sheet transport pathway interposed therebetween, each of the pair of gates being pivotable around a corresponding one of the pair of pivot shafts and extending substantially toward the downstream-side sheet transport pathways, the gate member pivoting unit pivoting the pair of gates substantially simultaneously and substantially in the same direction; and

a downstream-side gate member pivotable in a same direction as the pair of upstream-side gates.

2. (original) The image forming device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the gate member pivoting unit includes:

a drive unit that supplies drive force for driving at least one of the pair of upstream-side gate members to pivot selectively in a forward direction and a reverse direction;

a drive transmission mechanism that transmits the drive force from the drive unit to the at least one of the pair of upstream-side gate members; and

a ganging mechanism that gangs pivoting movement of the at least one of the pair of upstream-side gate members with the other of the pair of upstream-side gate members.

3. (currently amended) The image forming device as claimed in claim 2, wherein ~~the pathway switching mechanism further includes a downstream-side gate member,~~ the downstream-side gate member ~~having~~ has a downstream-side pivot shaft and a downstream-side gate, the downstream-side pivot shaft being positioned directly upstream from the plurality of downstream-side sheet transport pathways and downstream from the divergence point, the downstream-side gate being pivotable around the downstream-side pivot shaft and extending substantially toward the upstream-side sheet transport pathway, the gate member pivoting unit pivoting the downstream-side gate and the pair of upstream-side gates in the same direction.

4. (original) The image forming device as claimed in claim 3, wherein the drive transmission mechanism includes a first drive transmission mechanism that transmits drive force from the drive unit to the downstream-side gate and pivots the downstream-side gate in a selected one of opposite directions.

5. (original) The image forming device as claimed in claim 4, wherein the drive transmission unit further includes a second drive transmission mechanism that connects the downstream-side gate to one of the pair of upstream-side gate members to transmit pivoting movement of the downstream-side gate to the one of the pair of upstream-side gate members.

6. (original) The image forming device as claimed in claim 5, further comprising:

a main casing; and

a plurality of sheet guides that are attached to the main casing and that are disposed in opposition with each other with the upstream-side sheet transport pathway defined therebetween,

at least one of the plurality of sheet guides being at least one of attachable/detachable and openable/closable with respect to the main casing and at least partially defining the upstream-side sheet transport pathway, one gate member of the pair of upstream-side gate members being assembled to the at least one of the plurality of sheet guides that is at least one of attachable/detachable and openable/closable;

wherein the ganging mechanism includes:

an urging member that is interposed between the at least one of the plurality of sheet guides and another of the pair of upstream-side gate members and that urges the other of the pair of upstream-side gate members toward the one of the pair of upstream-side gate members; and

an abutment member for maintaining a gap between the pair of upstream-side gate members, the abutment member being fixed to the one of the upstream-side gates at a position that is between the pair of upstream-side gate members and that is separated from a surface of the one of the upstream-side gates along which sheets are transported.

7. (currently amended)~~The image forming device as claimed in claim 1, further comprising:~~ An image forming device comprising:

an upstream-side sheet transport pathway;

a plurality of downstream-side sheet transport pathways that diverge from the upstream-side sheet transport pathway at a divergence point;

a pathway switching mechanism that, at the divergence point, selectively guides sheets transported following the upstream-side sheet transport pathway to one of the plurality of downstream-side sheet transport pathways, the pathway switching mechanism including:
a pair of upstream-side gate members and a gate member pivoting unit, the pair of upstream-side gate members including a pair of pivot shafts and a pair of gates, the pair of pivot shafts being disposed with the sheet transport pathway interposed therebetween, each of the pair of gates being pivotable around a corresponding one of the pair of pivot shafts and extending substantially toward the downstream-side sheet transport pathways, the gate member pivoting unit pivoting the pair of gates substantially simultaneously and substantially in the same direction;

a main casing; and

a plurality of sheet guides that are attached to the main casing and that are disposed in opposition with each other with the upstream-side sheet transport pathway defined therebetween, at least one of the plurality of sheet guides being at least one of attachable/detachable and openable/closable with respect to the main casing and at least partially defining the upstream-side sheet transport pathway, one gate member of the pair of upstream-side gate members being assembled to the at least one of the plurality of sheet guides that is at least one of attachable/detachable and openable/closable.

8. (currently amended) The image forming device as claimed in claim 1, wherein ~~the pathway switching mechanism further includes a downstream-side gate member,~~ the downstream-side gate member ~~having~~ has a downstream-side pivot shaft and a downstream-side gate, the downstream-side pivot shaft being positioned directly upstream from the plurality of downstream-side sheet transport pathways and downstream from the divergence point, the downstream-side gate being pivotable around the downstream-side pivot shaft and extending substantially toward the upstream-side sheet transport pathway, the gate member pivoting unit pivoting the downstream-side gate and the pair of upstream-side gates in the same direction.

9. (currently amended) ~~The image forming device as claimed in claim 1, further comprising:~~ An image forming device comprising:

an upstream-side sheet transport pathway;

a plurality of downstream-side sheet transport pathways that diverge from the upstream-side sheet transport pathway at a divergence point;

a pathway switching mechanism that, at the divergence point, selectively guides sheets transported following the upstream-side sheet transport pathway to one of the plurality of downstream-side sheet transport pathways, the pathway switching mechanism including: a pair of upstream-side gate members and a gate member pivoting unit, the pair of upstream-side gate members including a pair of pivot shafts and a pair of gates, the pair of pivot shafts being

disposed with the sheet transport pathway interposed therebetween, each of the pair of gates being pivotable around a corresponding one of the pair of pivot shafts and extending substantially toward the downstream-side sheet transport pathways, the gate member pivoting unit pivoting the pair of gates substantially simultaneously and substantially in the same direction;

a main casing; and

a plurality of sheet guides that are attached to the main casing and that are disposed in opposition with each other with the upstream-side sheet transport pathway defined therebetween, the gate member pivoting unit pivoting the downstream gate only into at least a first pivot posture and a second pivot posture, a space sufficiently large for a sheet to pass through being opened between the downstream gate and one of the sheet guides while the downstream gate is in the first pivot posture and between the downstream gate and another of the sheet guides while the downstream gate is in the second pivot posture, the downstream gate being in a non-intersecting, non-abutting condition with the sheet guides in regardless of pivot posture.

10. (newly added) The image forming device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the pair of upstream-side gate members and the downstream-side gate member pivot substantially simultaneously in substantially the same direction.

11. (newly added) The image forming device as claimed in claim 1, wherein:

the downstream-side gate member includes a pivot shaft and a gate member;

the pivot shaft is positioned upstream from the plurality of downstream-side sheet transport pathways and downstream from the divergence point;

the gate member is pivotable around the pivot shaft and extends upstream with respect to a sheet transport direction; and

the gate member does not contact any sheet guides regardless of a pivot position of the gate member, the sheet guides are disposed in opposition with each other with the upstream-side sheet transport pathway defined therebetween.

12. (newly added) The image forming device as claimed in claim 1, wherein a space sufficient for allowing a sheet to pass therethrough is always opened between the gate member and sheet guides that are disposed in opposition with each other with the upstream-side sheet transport pathway defined therebetween.

13. (newly added) The image forming device as claimed in claim 1, further comprising a linking mechanism for moving the pair of upstream-side gate members and the downstream-side gate member back and forth.

14. (newly added) The image forming device as claimed in claim 13, wherein the linking mechanism comprises:

a compression spring interposed between a detachable sheet guide and an upper-side gate member of the pair of gates, the compression spring urging the upper-side gate member downward toward a lower-side gate member of the pair of gates; and

an abutment member protruding from the lower-side gate member toward the upper-side gate member and located away from the pathway of transported sheets, the abutment member serving to maintain a gap between the upper-side gate member and the lower-side gate member against the urging force of the compression spring.

15. (newly added) The image forming device as claimed in claim 14, wherein, when the lower-side gate member is pivoted clockwise, the upper-side gate member pivots clockwise against the urging force of the compression spring such that the linking mechanism functions to pivot the upper-side gate member and the lower-side gate member linkingly in the same pivot direction and also to maintain a fixed space between the upper-side gate member and the lower-side gate member to enable a sheet to pass between the upper-side gate member and the lower-side gate member.

16. (newly added) An image forming device, comprising:

- an upstream-side sheet transport pathway;
- a plurality of downstream-side sheet transport pathways that diverge from the upstream-side sheet transport pathway at a divergence point; and

- a pathway switching mechanism comprising:

- a pivotal upper side upstream gate member and a pivotal lower side upstream gate member positioned upstream from a divergence point leading to a plurality of downstream-side sheet transport pathways, the pivotal upper side upstream gate member and the pivotal lower side upstream gate member, upon pivoting, direct the sheets to one of the plurality of downstream-side sheet transport pathways; and

- a downstream-side gate member comprising a pivot shaft and a gate member, the pivot shaft being positioned upstream from the plurality of downstream-side sheet transport pathways and downstream from the divergence point, the gate member being pivotable around the pivot shaft and extending upstream with respect to a sheet transport direction, the gate member does not contact any sheet guides, which are disposed in opposition with each other with the upstream-side sheet transport pathway defined therebetween, regardless of a pivot position of the gate member.

17. (newly added) The image forming device as claimed in claim 16, wherein the pivotal upper side upstream gate member and the pivotal lower side upstream gate member and the downstream-side gate member pivot substantially simultaneously in substantially the same direction.